Little Miss Faith

Grace LeBaron

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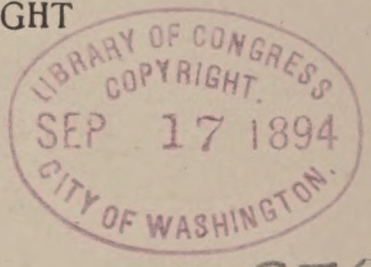
LITTLE MISS FAITH

"It was hard to decide which made the more attractive picture." — *Page* 155.

THE HAZELWOOD STORIES

LITTLE MISS FAITH

THE STORY OF A COUNTRY WEEK AT FALCONS-HEIGHT



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GRACE LE BARON

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Little Miss Faith

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LITTLE MISS FAITH.

CHAPTER I.

AND so good morning, Mrs. Lovelace. Think well over the matter, and let me know before Saturday, if you can. 'T is only for a week, remember; but many roses can grow in that time, and bloom for little Elsie's good, I hope, and I want to see their rosiest colorings in her pale face. Good morning."

So saying, the kind missionary, Miss Green, closed the door, leaving Mrs. Love-

lace to decide the matter that her mother love only could settle. She walked to the window to watch her visitor out of sight.

Alas! unwittingly she had left a thorn behind her to prick the conscience of the guardian of little Elsie; for Mrs. Lovelace, with a long-drawn sigh, murmured, —

"'And bloom for little Elsie's good!' 'Her pale face!' Can Elsie be ill?"

As if in answer to her questionings, the door opened, and Elsie herself, with one bound, entered the room. Running up to her mother, she flung her arms around her neck, and with true childish glee cried, in one long breath, —

"Oh, mamma, mamma, see! Mrs. King paid me ten cents more than her bill, so that I could ride home, she said; but I don't believe that she would care if she knew that I saved them for my blessed

mamma! Do you, mamma? And so here they are! I hurried home faster than the cars could have come, anyway;" and the flushed cheeks and breathless panting of the little girl told the story of her haste better than any words could have done.

"And are you tired, little daughter?" asked her mother.

"Oh, no, indeed! Why, little girls were made to run, mamma. Mrs. King was delighted, too, with your sewing, and said she should bring you more next week. And, oh, mamma, I just met Miss Green on the street! She pinched my cheeks, to make them red, she said; but I believe it was only to give me a sailor's kiss, for she kissed me, truly. What makes you look so sober all in a minute, mamma? Don't you want any one to kiss me but

you? I 'll rub it all off, — there!" and she took the corner of her little white apron, and pretended to wipe the kiss from her cheek.

"Why, no, my little daughter; I am not so selfish as that, I hope. I want every one to love you, and you to love every one and me, and be the light of my heart always, always."

And as she repeated the word she seemed to have a far-away look in her eyes. After a moment's pause, she asked, "Elsie, how would you like to go into the country for a week to see the green trees and the pretty flowers growing?"

"Oh, shall we go? May I?" asked Elsie, excitedly; to whom the city had been her only home, and the country was but a dream.

"Yes, you can go; but mamma is not

invited, and you would not have me go where I am not wanted, would you?"

"Very well, then I 'm afraid if they don't want you, my blessed mamma, they cannot have me either," said Elsie.

"Tut, tut, tut! not so fast, little daughter; you will think differently, I hope, when you hear all I have to say about it, my champion. Listen!" said Mrs. Lovelace.

"Well, who is 'they,' mamma?" asked Elsie.

"I do not know the lady; but her name is Goodwin,—Mrs. Goodwin, wife of Judge Goodwin of Hazelwood. She has a little invalid girl just about your age. By the by, Elsie, do you remember that you are to have a birthday soon?"

"Yes, I shall be ten years old on the twenty-second of this month. I wish I was older, mamma, so that I could help

you more; but then I shall be soon old enough to do the overcasting on the long seams. You think I can only take out those tiresome bastings; but I am going to show you before long, that I know how to use a needle, and that pretty silver thimble you gave me last Christmas," said Elsie. "But do go on, please, and tell me all about this journey to the land of roses, — do, dear mamma!" she added.

"Well," replied Mrs. Lovelace, "Miss Green is a missionary for a charitable society; and this lady, Mrs. Goodwin, has written to her to know if she can send a little girl to be company for her little daughter for a week."

Elsie clapped her hands with childish eagerness.

"Oh, I always did want a sister; but then, 't is only for a week: that won't

be long, will it, mamma?" said Elsie, and Elsie's face looked its disappointment.

How different the reasoning! To the child a week was but the few days it counted; but to the fond mother these same seven days promised to be the longest in her calendar of life, for it was to be her first separation from her only happiness.

"You are not invited to be of the little girl's family," said Mrs. Lovelace, "not as a sister nor as a friend; but as a companion to the invalid, to amuse her probably. She might not like it if you called yourself her sister. She has parents and friends, and perhaps a sister of her own, too, and you — you are but a poor little girl, with only mamma to love you;" and Mrs. Lovelace hugged the child to her breast with great fervor.

"Is she rich?" asked Elsie.

"Yes," responded Mrs. Lovelace; "at least, so Miss Green says."

"Well," said Elsie, "I don't believe, with all their money, that her mother loves her any better than you do me, or I do you, mamma."

"That could never be, Elsie. Money, as has always been said, cannot buy us our happiness," returned Mrs. Lovelace; "for that is a gift from the good Father, who knows His ways and our needs best. But we must get our luncheon, for it is near school-time, and this afternoon I shall write Miss Green you will be ready to go on Wednesday next, the sixteenth. Let me see, it is now Saturday, and there is but little needed to prepare you for the week's visit."

Looking up, Mrs. Lovelace was sur-

prised to see Elsie apparently counting upon her fingers the days of the week, —

"Saturday, one, Sunday, two, Monday, three," and so on.

"Could she be," thought Mrs. Lovelace, "so anxious to go that she must count the days before going?" and, interrupting her, she asked, —

"What is it, Elsie? What are you counting so busily?"

"Why," answered the child, "I shall be away from you on my birthday, and I never was away from you before, you know, mamma, on that day, and it is always such a gay holiday for us. What will I do without your ten kisses to wake me up with in the morning, and what will you do without me, mamma?"

"What, indeed?" thought Mrs. Lovelace, as she turned to look out of the win-

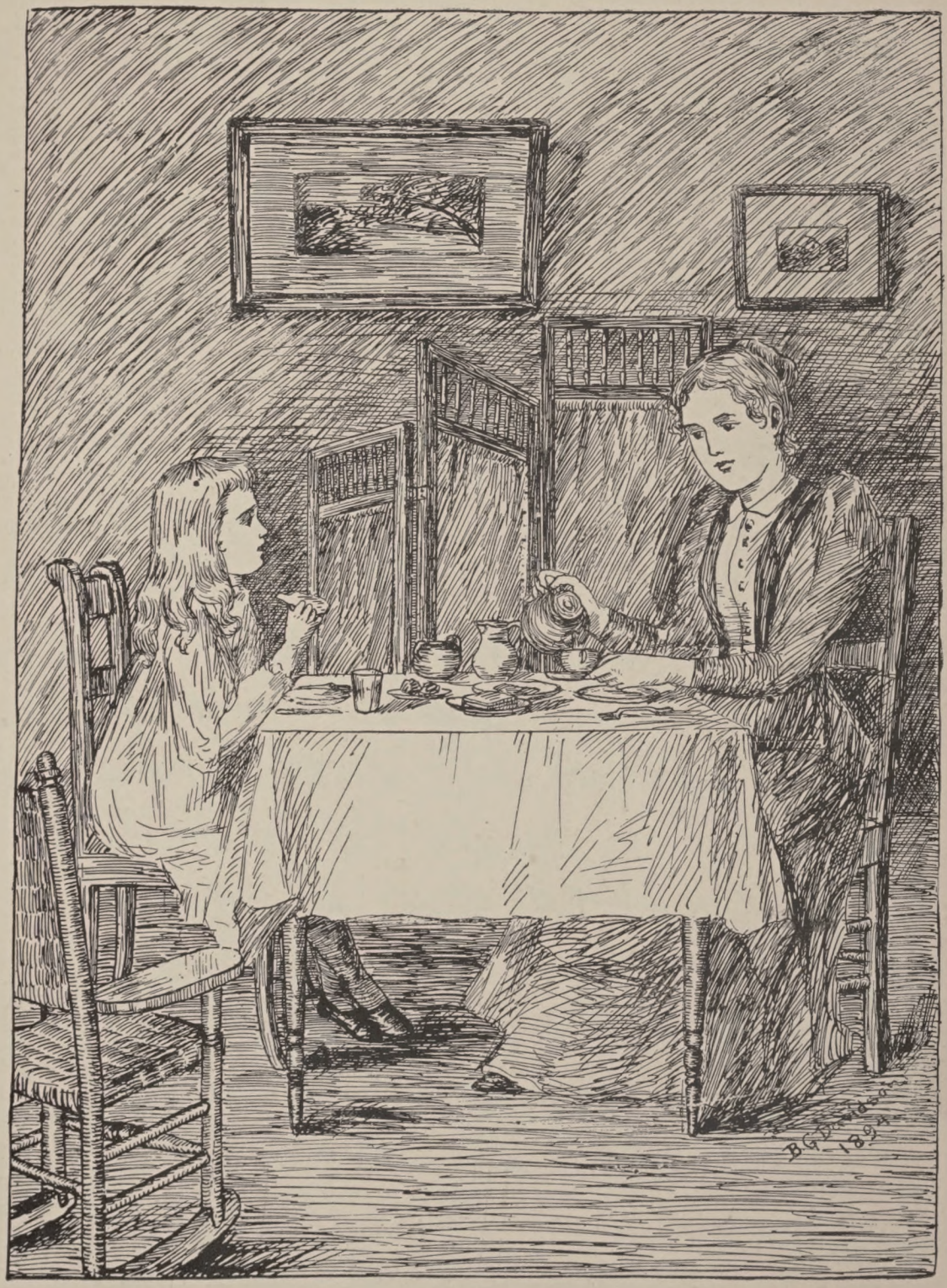
dow to hide her feelings; but she as quickly turned back again, and said cheerily,—

"I shall send them to you in a letter, and give you fresh ones when you come home again, little daughter."

And the two laughed as two children,—the one with the true ring of the real child, and the other, as if trying to be gay and unselfish for the good of the "pale face" and the coming roses.

Soon the kettle was singing on the fire; and Elsie, like the child housekeeper that she was, deftly placed the cover on the table, cut the bread in thin delicate slices, while her mother prepared the rest of the luncheon, and the two sat down to their noonday meal.

They chatted over the anticipated visit, and Mrs. Lovelace actually forgot her first feelings of coming loneliness, in the happy



"The two sat down to their noonday meal." — *Page* 18.

thought of Elsie's pleasure so soon to be.

"Mamma," said the latter, "who is to pay all the money, — to buy my tickets, I mean? The Society, I suppose; but won't it seem funny to be a charity patient? But it 's kind of them just the same, is n't it, mamma?"

"So it would be, but no, Elsie," replied Mrs. Lovelace, "Mrs. Goodwin is a dear friend of Miss Green's, and wrote to her not exactly because she was the good missionary that she is, but because she thought she might know just the right little girl, I fancy, to receive into her home, and make her own little one happy; and she has written to Miss Green that she wants to bear all the expense of *her* pleasure, as she calls it. But look! it is getting late, and you must start on your way to school."

"Oh, dear, no, mamma, not until I have helped you to clear away the table," said Elsie.

"No, no, little daughter," returned Mrs. Lovelace; "you know that errand to Mrs. King's took all your spare time. You are my little helper always, and it will take but a very few moments to settle, and then I must write the letter. What shall I say to Miss Green for you, Elsie?"

"Tell her, oh, tell her, mamma, that I do want to go, but I wish they wanted my blessed mamma too," said Elsie.

"Oh, I can't say that, dearie; it would n't be quite polite," replied her mother. "I will tell her, however, it will be our first separation. Good-by, little daughter."

Elsie kissed her mother, and was off with the wind, her good-by echoing behind her.

Mrs. Lovelace speedily set her little home to rights, and sat down and wrote the following letter: —

MY DEAR MISS GREEN, — Elsie and I have been talking over the country week at Falconsheight, and we both think it very kind of Mrs. Goodwin to be willing to open her house to a little stranger like Elsie; but I will have her all ready Wednesday for the journey. You will write the good lady, please, that my little daughter has always had me to watch her every step through life, and should she complain of any illness to call me at once, please.

I have no fear of anything else. She has always been a good little girl, and I know will be gentle and kind.

Sincerely,

SARAH LOVELACE.

B——, June 12, 18—.

Just as she finished the letter, the postman knocked at the door with the after-

noon mail, and cheerfully agreed to post it at the main office on his return there.

Mrs. Lovelace, as she commenced her sewing again, could not keep back a sigh, and a tear that escaped from her eyes was wiped away as an intruder upon her good resolutions and the coming pleasure.

CHAPTER II.

ONLY a few days previous to the opening of our story, there had come to one in the great stone house on the heights just outside the village of Hazelwood an inspiration.

Now, an inspiration is supposed to be a beautiful thought, as if sent by the angels from heaven; and if ever there was one who lived very near to the angels, it was little Faith Goodwin, daughter of Judge and Mrs. Goodwin, the owners of the great estate, which they named, after the fashion of their English ancestry, Falcons-

height; the falcon having been their family crest for many generations, and their eyrie home on the heights suggesting the rest of the long but pretty name.

The Goodwins had been only six years residents of the quiet country town of Hazelwood; but they had endeared themselves even in that short time to all its people.

The Judge was looked upon as public adviser, giving freely to the villagers of his legal knowledge "without money and without price;" while Lady Goodwin, as she was called, was the "Lady Bountiful," whose heart was always open to all good interests, and was the one woman of the town who could adapt herself as readily to the needs of the factory hands and their families as to the social demands upon her time by their more fortunate employers.

When the Goodwins bought the old homestead on the hill, the village folk wondered at the investment, and many an old woman who had looked upon "the ruins on the heights," as the old homestead was called, as so much "dead wood," prophesied that the buyers would "sink their money;" but when one bright summer the beautiful stone castle looked out through the trees, and caught on the one side the summer sun and on the other the cooling breezes from the lake beyond, the croakers allowed there never was a more perfect place "to pitch a tent."

The Goodwins brought with them their only child, the little invalid Faith, crippled in body from a fall in her infancy while in her nurse's care. Instead of discharging Rachel, the colored woman, they still retained her in their service; and she

was like a faithful watch-dog. She would say almost daily, in her Southern dialect: "I done goin' leave missy till the Judgment Day comes to her or to me." And when her friends would chaff her, and ask her if she had not given her word to Samuel Johnson to marry him, she would reply, "To be certainly, but that don't signify;" meaning that her first duty was to the little crippled girl, who became so through an accident of which she was a victim rather than a cause.

Falcons-height was a beautiful place; the trees bent their branches everywhere about it, and at some of the windows seemed begging an entrance; the clinging vines over the one side, and the drooping wistaria blossoms over the other formed a happy combination of decoration. In the background was the lake,

with its gayly trimmed boats at the boat-launch, which the villagers were allowed the use of on certain days; and many a serenade came floating over the water to the little girl in the room above, from the merry picnickers, who seemed to regard Faith's window almost as a shrine of worship.

From out this window waved an American flag, that could be seen from the heights all over the little village of Hazelwood, and told to all who saw it that Faith was in her usual health, and able to see her friends.

She had been told that it was a custom in Uncle Sam's military posts for the commandant to have a flag run up on the high flagstaff, to show to all that he was at his post, — "at home," in other words; and she had asked to follow the

fashion of the military, and called America's banner her "at home" invitation to the neighbors, who came daily, bringing to the little invalid flowers and fruits that transformed her room into a miniature horticultural show the most of the time.

Invalid as she was, she rarely allowed the flag to be taken down; for when actual necessity demanded it, it seemed to affect every household in the village, telling them that Faith was too ill to be disturbed, and it was for that very reason that Faith insisted upon having the flag out, even when better judgment told her family she should be kept in quiet.

She would gently say when her mother urged it taken in, "No, please don't, mamma, not to-day; for poor old Mrs.

Harris will surely come walking over from the village to inquire at the servants' lodge, and she is so lame;" or, "You know, mamma, to-day is the day of the charity-school picnic, and I cannot have my little friends go with heavy hearts."

And Mrs. Goodwin would consent to Faith's wishes, and say to herself, "Truly a little child shall lead them."

The morning on which the inspiration came to Faith was a bright, sunny one in early June. The trees were in full dress of green; the roses clambered over their trellis, and one or two actually forced themselves into the window of the little invalid's room, and Faith, as she leaned forward in her chair, easily picked one. Holding it up to her mother, she said,—

"Look, look, mamma, smell it, how sweet! How beautiful, is n't it? I wish

every one might have roses grow in their way, as I do; but some never see a rose, I suppose, and some lives are full of cares and troubles, more like the thorns than the beautiful roses."

"And has my little girl no cares and troubles, no thorns, in her path of life?" asked Mrs. Goodwin, wondering what reply Faith would make.

"Cares? thorns? No, mamma, no," replied Faith; "why, only think, I have you and papa to love me, and Rachel to do everything she can for me. Of course my back aches now and then, and I can't run about as other little girls do; but I can ride, mamma;" and she smiled as sweetly as if her little wheel chair and its devoted attendant were a fashionable village-cart with its Shetland ponies.

"Then," she continued, "you know at night, as I go to sleep, I look out and see the sky lanterns, and I almost think I can see Auntie May's face, and grandma's, watching over me. But, dear mamma, these roses make me wish that some of those poor little city children could see them; and Rachel told me only yesterday, that there was a society in the city, that found homes for just such little girls and boys to visit in, during the summer, and I wish, oh, I do wish that I could have a little girl come to visit me for a while, mamma. Can't you ask one to come for a week, anyway? Tell her I want her to come, and I am sure she will. Perhaps Miss Green will know of some nice little girl. Won't you write to her, mamma dear?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Goodwin, to whom

a wish of Faith's was a duty in its granting, — "yes, I will write Miss Green if you wish me to, Faith."

"Do, do please, dear mamma," said Faith.

And so began the first planning for the little visitor.

CHAPTER III.

THE day fixed for the journey arrived, and Elsie had lain awake a good part of the night before. She had packed over and over again, in fancy, the small valise that was to hold her modest wardrobe; but towards morning had fallen asleep, to awake to find her good mother laying her clothes, one by one, carefully into the same valise that she herself in the night watches had planned so many ways to pack.

"Come, little daughter, dress you," was the greeting she heard from her busy mother. "Come to breakfast, for soon Miss Green will be here to take you and this 'Saratoga' of yours to the station. I wonder if I have put in everything?" she added.

"Have you put in Dollie Dorothy?" asked Elsie. "I could n't think of leaving her behind, mamma;" so saying, she jumped from the little bed, and running to a bureau drawer, drew forth a beautiful golden-haired doll, dressed in a pretty blue frock, which she quickly took off, as being, she said, "not a fit one to travel in."

So Dollie Dorothy was redressed and slept in the folds of Elsie's new gingham apron. Then, kneeling down, Elsie said her morning prayer, adding, —

"Please, God, take care of my blessed mamma until I come back."

She was soon dressed, and ready for breakfast; and before the meal was finished, Miss Green's knock was heard at the door. She was prevailed upon to take a cup of coffee, and excused herself for making such an early call, saying, —

"I thought I could pack Elsie's satchel, but you are both too smart for me, I perceive; still, I insist upon helping you in some way."

Soon, with the aid of the three, the little house was dusted and arranged, as the clock struck ten, and the train was to leave just before noon.

As the ride to the station was to be a long one, they were soon in the horse-car, on the way, Miss Green insisting upon her right to carry the valise.

And this was to be Elsie's first journey! She was happy in the thought, but equally mindful that her mother would miss her, as she turned lovingly to the latter, and said, —

"Only for a week, remember, blessed mamma."

Finding the conductor, Miss Green said to him, —

"I want you to look after this little girl, and see that she gets off at Hazelwood. She will be met there by friends. You won't forget now, will you?"

"No, ma'am," replied the conductor, with much decision; "that I won't, for I have a little girl of my own, just about her age, and I shall follow the Golden Rule. Have no fear, madam. Oh, you can put on the tag if you like, but there will be little need of it;" for Miss Green

was fastening around Elsie's neck a tag on which was written, —

ELSIE LOVELACE
CARE JUDGE GOODWIN
HAZELWOOD

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

As she fastened it on, she said to Elsie, "You see I am going to tag you, just as if you were a hand-bag or a trunk;" and Elsie laughingly rejoined, —

"Will they roll me over topsy-turvy, just as they do trunks, I wonder, Miss Green; for if they should, they would spoil the roses on my new hat."

"No, I think not," replied Miss Green. "I think they will handle you this side up with care, and, too, should you by any mischance fall into stranger hands, they will, I know, be impressed with the

words of the text on the tag. But I have no fear; for that conductor's face is one of honesty, as his heart is one of sympathy. He has promised to look after you, and I know that he will do so."

The parting between Elsie and her mother did not seem to have a shadow of regret. Each had, no doubt, tried to be brave for the other's good; and as the train steamed out of the station, the happy "Good-by" of Elsie was responded to by her mother, while the latter had no time for after thoughts, for Miss Green, with her usual kindness, said, turning to Mrs. Lovelace,—

"Now, Mrs. Lovelace, I want you to go home with me, and, in fact, I expect you to be my guest for a week."

There was no time for excuses. It was but the work of a moment to get

aboard a horse-car; and when Mrs. Lovelace remarked, "I have a piece of work to finish for Mrs. Clark this week," Miss Green, all prepared, answered firmly, —

"We will run in and get it to-morrow, then; but to-day is to be a real holiday, and this afternoon we shall go for a drive."

Meanwhile Elsie was speeding on. She sat quietly looking out of the window. She attempted to play the game of travelling solitaire, — bipeds counting two, quadrupeds four, and the black cat in the window (rarely found) counting six, — game one hundred, to be reached between stations; but the train made such quick time that it was too exciting work for the little traveller, so she tried to interest herself with the other passengers in the car.

Opposite sat a fashionable-looking party of young ladies, chattering like magpies, and Elsie wondered if they were going away on a visit too!

Then there was a woman with four little children in front of her, and one of the little ones would lean over the back of the seat and smile at Elsie, who was in terror lest the stick of peppermint candy which the little fellow was eating would fall into her lap, on her new dress. She hardly dared to smile in return, for fear the child might urge a closer acquaintance.

Each of his brothers was as well supplied as he with refreshments, as if the mother had given them to keep the peace.

But the baby! Well, it squirmed about in the arms of the poor tired-looking mother, crying and fretting constantly,

until Elsie, though but a child herself, said to the mother in her irresistible way, —

"I don't believe but that baby would come to me, and won't you let me take him, please?"

Again the mother sighed, but it was with relief, as, placing the little wee thing in Elsie's arms, she said proudly, "His name is Napoleon Bonaparte, miss."

Napoleon Bonaparte! Elsie had learned, in her rudiments of history, of that great name; but somehow she felt it most inappropriate to this wee little baby, so out of sorts.

It was wonderful how well she amused him. She counted off all about the "little pigs" on his little pink toes, she played "peep boo" behind the fan Miss Green had given her in parting, and her singing of "Baby By-low" was rewarded

by having him fall asleep in her arms; and the tired mother, seeing the happy change, laid him on the extra seat, making him a bed out of some of the many wraps belonging to the party.

Every now and then the honest face of the conductor peeped in at the door as he announced the way stations; and Elsie felt as if she was in safe hands, for he never forgot to say to her, —

"Not yet, my little girl."

The fruit-vender passed through the car; and the children's mother bought reinforcements for each of her little ones, saying, as she did so, to Elsie, as if in apology, —

"Anything to keep 'em quiet, miss;" and then, as if trying to be polite, she added, "Don't you want a banana or an apple, miss?"

"No, I thank you," replied Elsie; and she looked up to see the conductor coming towards her. Patting her on the shoulder, he said, —

"Are you lonesome, little one? We 'll soon be there; but don't get nervous. I shall come for you, and lift you right out of the car myself. I told your mother I should follow the Golden Rule, and I shall. Possibly you don't know what that is; do you?" he asked.

Elsie assured him that she did, and added, as if in proof, —

"You have been very kind to me, sir, as kind as any one could be; and I hope if ever your little girl goes on a journey, she will have the same good care you have given me."

Soon "down brakes" was whistled by the noisy engine, and the conductor flew

through the car, grasped Elsie's valise in his hand and getting towards the door, with Elsie following, shouted in a voice that expressed no doubt, "Hazelwood;" and Elsie was lifted bodily in his strong arms off the car-step, and stood alone, the only passenger, on the platform, the conductor shouting to the station-agent, —

"Say, Mack, see that this little mite of luggage gets up to the Heights — Falconsheight — before dark. Good-by, little girl," he added to Elsie; and with a wave of his hand, as a signal, the long train continued on its way, and Elsie for the moment felt just her first pang of real loneliness.

It was only for a moment, however; for her attention was attracted by a sweet voice, saying, —

"I wonder if this is my little visitor.

What is your name, little girl? But I see it plainly written on the tag; that is Miss Green's forethought, I know. And you are little Elsie Lovelace, and I am Faith Goodwin's mother; so we must be good friends, and not waste any time in making ourselves acquainted."

"Such a beautiful face!" thought Elsie, and her voice was like sweet music! Indeed the very way in which she said, "James, please take this little girl's valise to the carriage, and we will follow," Elsie noticed had nothing of command in it; but James obeyed without delay, and Mrs. Goodwin and Elsie followed to the back of the station, where was a beautiful carriage, with a pair of bay horses in waiting.

Mrs. Goodwin placed Elsie safely inside the carriage, and seated herself beside her, and they rode away through the

village, then off through the woodland road, Elsie meanwhile almost entranced with delight. Finally she ventured the question, —

"Have you ever read 'Cinderella,' Mrs. Goodwin?"

"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Goodwin, "long ago, when I was a little girl like you. Of course you have read it too."

"Yes, ma'am," replied Elsie, "and I was trying to think if Cinderella felt any happier than I do, when she started off to the ball in her carriage." Then, as if in thought, she added: "I should n't want these horses to turn into mice, though, for I 'm terribly afraid of mice; and is n't it funny, the wheels of this carriage are yellow, just as yellow as the pumpkin that Cinderella's fairy godmother made over for her? Will you be my fairy god-

mother, Mrs. Goodwin? Only don't, don't, please, run away as Cinderella's did, will you?" asked Elsie.

This little story seemed to bring the two into closest thought, and Mrs. Goodwin answered Elsie that she would be her fairy godmother, if she wanted her to be so, and would not leave her until she returned her to her own dear mother.

Elsie saw much to enjoy. Country life was new to her, and the green trees growing in such profusion looked "just as they did in pictures," she said, forgetful of the fact that the pictures were made from the trees.

She wanted to get out and pick a few of the wild-flowers, but hardly dared to ask her hostess if she might do so, when Mrs. Goodwin said, "James, rest the horses for a moment in the shade,

and we will get out and gather a few of these flowers to take home to Miss Faith."

By the roadside they sauntered, and Elsie picked for her unknown friend a bunch of bright wild-flowers; and they returned to the carriage, and were soon in sight of Falcons-height, Elsie in her childlike way saying, —

"That must be the Prince's castle, fairy godmother."

"No, my dear," rejoined Mrs. Goodwin, "that is my home, your home for the present, and I am going to show you one of the sweetest little girls you ever saw. She cannot walk about, as you can, to be sure, but you cannot help loving her, and I prophesy you will be the fondest of friends. But here we are!" and as they drove up to the house, Elsie saw at the window the little invalid in her chair, and

"A little white hand waved a welcome to the home-comers." — *Page* 53.

a golden-haired girl looked out, whose little white hand waved a welcome to the home-comers.

Mrs. Goodwin led the way to Faith's room, Elsie following with subdued step, for she felt that a sick-room must be a sad place. Once inside, however, she forgot her first thoughts, and stood, hardly knowing what to do, when a musical voice called out, "Welcome, little sister! Come and kiss me, for I can't come to you, you see;" and Elsie knew she had found a friend in Faith.

"Then I can be your little sister, can't I, for a week? Can't I? Mamma said you would n't like me to call you so, but I shall tell her you called me your sister first, and so — I 'll kiss you, and call you sister — what shall I say?" asked Elsie.

"Sister Faith only," replied the other, "and you shall be my dear sister Elsie."

"Oh, what a pretty room this is!" said Elsie, as she walked from side to side, admiring the low book-shelves so arranged as to be within reach when Faith rolled herself about in her chair. They lined two sides of the room, and on one end of one of the bookcases was a sort of writing-desk that was so hinged as to fold at will. A low blackboard stood on its standard, so as to be readily reached by Faith, while a pretty doll-house was all arranged, as if in expectancy of the little visitor, who surveyed it admiringly.

One of the silent dwellers of the little house stood with her hand upon the door, as if she were holding it open for Elsie's coming.

The setting sun poured in at the windows of Faith's room, and shone across the little bed, and upon the low table at

its side, which Faith jestingly called her "five o'clock," after the fashion of the day.

It stood now awaiting the tea-tray, which Rachel was just bringing in; and Faith, by way of introduction, said, —

"This is my good nursey Rachel, sister Elsie. She has taken care of me ever since I was born."

"How do, miss?" said Rachel, as she bowed, or courtesied rather, to the introduction, and added: "Yes, miss, and I reck'n I 'll stay with Missy Faith as long as she done goin' let me. But here 's your supper, missy. I 'se sorry to intrude, but p'rhaps you disremember it 's goin' on five o'clock;" then, turning to Elsie, she said, "I don't guess you care for yours so early, miss;" and she made ready the little table.

She exchanged the pretty roses that had decorated it all day, for the bright wild-flowers that Elsie had picked by the roadside, and with that tact for which her people are well noted, said, —

"We can get roses any time, but wild-flowers are scurcerer."

As Faith sat eating her simple supper, she chatted with her new friend, and the two seemed like old acquaintances when Mrs. Goodwin entered, and called Elsie to come into a little room adjoining, and asked her if she would like to unpack her valise herself; if not, Rachel should do so for her. But Faith, who had overheard the conversation, decided the question by calling, —

"Oh, mamma, do please let sister Elsie come back to me, and have Rachel put away her clothes, won't you?"

So back again came Elsie to the little invalid's side, and they chatted untiringly about the beautiful country and the green trees and pretty wild-flowers, all so new to the little city girl.

The dusky Rachel ventured once over the threshold, but was unobserved by the happy children, and returned to Mrs. Goodwin, saying, —

"It done beat all to hear those two chilluns talking. You would think they had been pickaninnies together all their lives; and," she added with emphasis, "I 'se not 'fraid of that chile. I b'lieve she 's mos' as good as little Missy Faith! Leastwise, her face and manners look it; but I 'll wait a bit, I reck'n, for pretty is that handsome does."

CHAPTER IV.

ELSIE'S first night at Falcons-height was a peaceful one. She was tired from her long journey, and was quite ready to go to bed at the same early hour that Faith did.

Thoughts of her mother were with her until she closed her eyes in sleep.

She was awakened in the morning by the ringing of bells. She thought they did not sound quite like the fire-bells at home, but could not resist getting out of her bed to see. Everything was so peaceful that she was sure there could

be no fire, and was about to get back for just a little last nap, when Rachel tapped at her door, and told her breakfast would be ready in half an hour, and offered her services to help dress her; but the little girl had long ago learned the art of dressing herself, and refused kindly the proffered help.

"What are the bells ringing for?" Elsie called to Rachel.

"Why, why, bress me, chile, an' you from the city an' dunno' what day 't is! Why, this was the day what we Americans just teached those Britishers that we owned our own country;" and Rachel seemed to look a direct descendant of some revolutionary hero. She added: "This is the Seventeenth of June, bress you, chile. 'Hear dem bells;'" and Rachel went away singing the lines of the old plantation

song over and over again; and Elsie remembered that it was a holiday, and knew the bells must be the church and factory bells of the village.

Hastily dressing, she joined the family in the dining-room at breakfast.

"Good morning; how did you sleep, little girl, in your new home?" Mrs. Goodwin asked.

"Good morning, fairy godmother. Why, I slept just as hard as I could, thank you. I was so tired I dreamed I was a nurse to a little fairy prince, and he was just as naughty as any baby, too, Mrs. Goodwin."

"Perhaps you were still thinking of Cinderella and her pretty story, Elsie," rejoined Mrs. Goodwin.

"Oh, perhaps I was;" said Elsie, "but I guess that that naughty Napoleon Bona-

parte was in my dreams too. Ugh! how he did cry, Mrs. Goodwin!" And Elsie told Mrs. Goodwin of the companions of her journey.

After breakfast, as was the custom, the family met in Faith's room, and held their morning-prayer service, which seemed to be like a blessing on the day.

The little invalid seemed unusually bright, and Mrs. Goodwin began to think that youth was the fittest company for its own, after all.

Rachel had served, a day or two before, as a go-between from her little mistress to one of the housemaids, who was called to the city by the sickness of one of that large army of "cousins," who had bought for Faith the ribbons for her holiday dress, which was of simple white cambric. Flowing out from the side of

the little girl's chair was the broad sash of red, white, and blue ribbon; and Faith insisted that Elsie should wear its duplicate, which at the same time she had ordered for her visitor.

Faith still further surprised her family by requesting that she might be taken down on the broad piazza, and hear what she could of her father's address to the villagers, who had been invited to Falcons-height, and given its freedom from eleven till four. A substantial luncheon was to be served under the trees, after Judge Goodwin's patriotic address was over, and then the boats on the lake were to be at the service of any who wished to use them.

Rachel seemed to feel herself a mistress of ceremonies almost, and went about with an air of possession that her

long life under the family roof seemed to excuse.

Indeed, she always used the first person plural when speaking of anything belonging to the Goodwin mansion.

"Our horses" always conveyed an air of interest rather than of possession, though; and so to-day she felt the importance of the hour, and her position, as she urged more speed in preparation, saying, —

"I don't want to disencourage you, Massa Goodwin, but I don't guess you know what time it is, does yer? Our clock thar says half-past ten, and only thirty minutes left to get the chairs arrayed on the piazza for the quality folk."

And she excused herself to Missy, adding that she would come right back

to her as soon as she had attended to that part of the day's duties which she took upon herself to do.

It was decided that Faith's chair should be in a sheltered corner of the piazza, where she might at will make herself known to the company; and Rachel stood her body-guard, watching her every movement.

Along the long avenues leading to the house, crowds of villagers wended their way, all in holiday attire. Old Farmer Peters led by the hand a little grandchild, while his wife followed with another; and his daughter, the mother of the little family, sheltered a third, a wee baby, in her arms. All ages, and, too, all faiths were represented; for Judge Goodwin had had notices of invitation tacked to the trees, and one staring great

notice in big black lettering had decorated the town pump for a week, which read, —

FREEDOM OF FALCONS-HEIGHT.

Judge and Mrs. Goodwin will receive the townspeople of Hazelwood on June seventeenth, from eleven A. M. until four P. M.

Come all — for all will be welcome.

And all were made welcome. Swings had been hung to some of the older trees, away from the house, so that the little people who could not quite understand Judge Goodwin's address might leave their parents uninterrupted in the enjoyment of it.

James and the gardener performed escort duty through the long conservatories; their duties were light, however, for it was only the tiny child, who knew no better, that had to be chided for touching, unbidden, the bright flowers.

All seemed impressed with the generosity of the lord of the manor, and would not trespass upon his hospitality.

Judge and Mrs. Goodwin, standing upon the steps of the piazza, bade their guests welcome; and the former, in his short address, carried the people back in thought to those days of the Revolutionary War, and, as if to freshen the memories of the older and tax the knowledge of the younger people, he called upon some of the schoolchildren to answer such questions as, "What caused the Revolutionary War?" and, "Where was the first blood shed during that war?"

One little girl, in a stronger voice than her looks indicated, called out in answer to the first question, "Tea!" which made all shout with laughter, although all felt that the little scholar had the true idea.

To the question "Where was the first blood shed?" there was a difference of opinion. Some cried, "Lexington," some "Concord;" and Judge Goodwin was forced to explain that "historians differ, but that no doubt the first shot heard around the world was at Lexington."

And so the day brought its teachings as well as its pleasures.

"And now," concluded Judge Goodwin, "my good friends and neighbors, I offer to you all, in behalf of Mrs. Goodwin and myself, the freedom and hospitality of Falcons-height. Luncheon will be served under the trees at one o'clock."

This was a signal for loud cheering by the villagers for their host and hostess.

Faith sat in her chair in the shelter of the foliage, and had it not been for the devotion of Rachel would have been over-

whelmed with the greetings of the people, old and young.

Charlie Lawrence hobbled up on his crutches to her side, to say, —

"Miss Faith, I want to thank you so much for the pretty flowers you sent me; they brightened my sick-room, and I have pressed them to keep always to remind me of you."

But he had to give way to old Widow Hunt, who felt she must say how much she enjoyed "those berries you sent, Miss Faith."

And so they went on, until Rachel, who seemed to have full power to command, said, —

"Bress you, honey, everybody will have just the very same story to tell, and then whar'll you be I dunno;" and she rolled her little mistress into the house, while up

" Oh, here you are, little one ! " — *Page* 71.

from the crowd went the cry, "Blessings on your young head," and "Long life to you!"

Elsie, meanwhile, had mingled with the villagers, and was made to know that she had one friend among them, as a tall man bent forward and grasped her hand, saying, "Oh, here you are, little one! I knew Mack would take good care of you."

And Elsie looked up to see the conductor who had been in truth her protector on her journey to Hazelwood.

"Why, Mr. Conductor, do you live about here? I thought you lived —"

"On the train," he interrupted, "and slept in the wood-box, perhaps."

"No, no, Mr. Conductor, but I did n't know you belonged right here, where I was coming," said Elsie; then adding, "What is your name, please, sir?"

"Mr. Jackson," replied the conductor; "and I arranged with Jones, the other conductor who runs the night train to the city, to take my train, so I might come up here, for I live right by the depot down in the village. Here — here 's my little girl," he added, as he took by the hand a modest, half-frightened little girl. "Lucy is just about your age, I guess. How old are you, little one?"

"I shall be ten years old next week, sir," answered Elsie.

Just as she did so, Mrs. Goodwin came up; and after a greeting to the honest conductor, she turned to Elsie, saying, —

"Ten years old next week, did you say, Elsie?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Elsie.

"What day?" asked Mrs. Goodwin.

"On the twenty-second," replied Elsie.

"I did know the day of the week, but I have forgotten now. I only remember it will be the first birthday I ever spent away from my blessed mamma; but I go home, you know, the next day, and she said she would save all her kisses for me."

"The twenty-second!" said Mrs. Goodwin; "why, what a coincidence! and yet not such a strange thing, either, for my sister and I have the same birthday, although she is two years my senior; but," she added, "it is Faith's birthday too. She will be eleven years old, and you are ten?" asked Mrs. Goodwin.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Elsie.

Together they followed the company to the luncheon-table under the trees, Elsie adding to Mrs. Goodwin's parting word to Mr. Jackson her own, —

"Good-by, Mr. Conductor Jackson. I

hope you will be on the train that will take me home next week. Good-by, sir."

Under the shady apple-trees long tables had been spread, decorated with bunting of red, white, and blue; and mammoth American flags seemed to form a canopy over the guests. The ices were moulded into eagle shapes; while in the centre of the table was an immense pyramid of sherbet, representing Bunker Hill Monument with a miniature flag in spun candy flying from the top.

Everything wore a patriotic look, and the great company separated with the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner;" Faith seeming to add her blessing, as she waved from her window a little starry flag.

Just as Conductor Jackson was leaving,

Mrs. Goodwin, who had been missing for a few moments from the gala crowd, went up to him, and said, —

"Mr Jackson, did I understand you were going on the six-o'clock train to the city?"

"Yes, Mrs. Goodwin," replied the conductor. "I board it at the station in an hour. Can I do anything for you? I shall be there by ten o'clock to-night. Command me."

"No, good sir," rejoined Mrs. Goodwin, "I cannot command; but I have a very important note which I would like delivered to-night. Pretty late to ask a tired man to become a messenger boy, is n't it? But the truth is, I cannot explain my business as I would like by telegraph."

"No apologies, Mrs. Goodwin; it will be a pleasure to serve you, and sleep lost

in doing for you will be happiness gained in its place," replied the gallant conductor.

"Thank you," returned Mrs. Goodwin. "Then will you be so kind as to see this note delivered to-night, if your train is on time; if not, very early in the morning will answer."

And so Mr. Jackson, who had before proved himself such an honest "old reliable" to Miss Green, became likewise the faithful messenger for Mrs. Goodwin; for, before he slept that night, he had fulfilled his promise to the latter.

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning Elsie woke up to the music of the rain on the window, and heard it patter on the tin roof of the wide piazza.

Raising her curtain, she looked out upon the country. She had never seen so many trees before, she thought, as each one stood out so green, dripping with the heavy rain; and the leaves looked so shining she could only think of Mrs. Blake's wax flowers, and became surer than ever of her neighbor's genius as an artist.

It seemed as if she were always comparing the real with the copy, for the copy had been to her, through her little life, the reality.

On the broad lawn the robins in their scarlet waistcoats hopped and halted in their funny way, as if listening to some voice calling them to their breakfast, as they dipped their beaks into the wet ground, to snatch the worms which were to be the food for their little families, high up in the trees; and away they flew with them.

Patter, patter, patter, fell the rain; and Elsie felt, with each sound, as if one day of her visit must be lost, but chided herself for such an ungenerous thought, and said aloud, thinking of Faith's patience,—

"I ought to be thankful that I have

so many days when I can go out; and besides, to-day will be just the day for me to amuse and play with my new sister Faith," when a sweet voice cried out, —

"Are you calling me, little sister? I heard you say my name, did n't I?"

"Yes," answered Elsie, glad enough that her good spirit had come to her in time, — "yes, I was talking to myself, and saying you and I can have a nice day to play together. Can't we? May I come in?" and she sealed her "Good-morning" with a kiss.

It was arranged that the two children should have this as a day to devote to books and dolls; and Dollie Dorothy "made her début into society," so Elsie said.

It was laughable to hear the instruc-

tions given the inhabitants of Dollie-land, as to how they must behave when they went out calling.

"Now, Dorothy," said Elsie, "you must sit very quietly in the parlor, and be sure you do not cross your feet; for that is very bad manners, you know."

Considering that Dorothy's joints were not those of her own free will but worked by her little mistress, the advice seemed very funny.

"And, too," she continued, "you must always rise from your chair when a caller leaves the room, and, above all, be quite sure to shake hands with the lady of the house when you depart."

All these commands, and others too, were heeded more by Mrs. Goodwin, who sat by, than by the dumb toy of the play-room. She was amazed to see the know-

ledge that Elsie had of the customs of good society, and felt sure that her youth was guarded by one who had been well used to the nicer ways of life.

The morning seemed very short to Elsie, despite the rain; and she was quite sure that Faith, too, looked at it in the same way, for when Rachel came in with her dinner-tray she looked up surprised, and said cheerily, —

"Please don't say it is dinner-time, Nursey. Can it be? Cook's clock is fast; I know it must be."

"No, missy, it is jus' right by the sun; and look yonder, thar is the sun heself, trying to get out of that thar bank of clouds now. He 'll soon crack a smile on that picture thar ahind the do'; just whar he did yesterday, or 'bout."

And true to Rachel's predictions, the

afternoon was bright and sunny, although everything was fairly deluged with the rain, that had fallen incessantly all night long.

Mrs. Goodwin proposed to Elsie that they ride over to the other side of the lake, and carry old Mrs. Harris some strawberries; "And," added Faith, "you won't forget the jug of fresh cream to put on them, mamma, will you?"

Another ride in Cinderella's coach was an unexpected pleasure to Elsie, but she did not forget a thought for Faith, and generously offered to stay behind and read "Dollikins and the Miser" to her; but Faith would not have it so, and with equal thought replied, —

"Oh, please, Elsie, go with mamma, and see my very oldest friend in Hazelwood. Good-by; run and dress quickly,

for I hear the carriage in the driveway now, and Prince and Princess will be just wild to go, after a dull morning in the stable."

A wave of the hand from the window, and a crack of the whip, which James always insisted upon at the start, as "a speed away," he said, and Mrs. Goodwin and Elsie were on the way to the cottage of old Mrs. Harris, whom Faith had rightfully called her oldest friend in Hazelwood, for she was the oldest person in the town.

A little basket heaped with big strawberries and covered with bright green leaves, a jug of fresh cream, and a box of cut flowers from the conservatory, were the offerings of the two; and Elsie seemed to feel herself a partaker in the thought of the old lady, by her share

in the care of the goodies which she held in her lap.

"Is Mrs. Harris a truly sick woman, Mrs. Goodwin?" asked Elsie.

"Why, yes, she is sick, yet not sick abed; is that what you mean?" answered Mrs. Goodwin.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Elsie, as she added her childish explanation of her question, — "for you know when people can sit up, even if they are sick, they are lots better off than when they have to lie in bed; and yet — " she hesitated before continuing, "and yet sister Faith does n't seem to be much better off, does she, fairy godmother?"

Mrs. Goodwin assured her well-meaning companion that Faith enjoyed a great amount of pleasure in life; "and," she continued, "I often think that she gives

possibly more happiness to others than many who have good health."

"Oh, I am sure she does," replied Elsie, "and she teaches just such thankless little girls as I am that we must try to enjoy all we have, and not wish for more that we can't have. I don't spend so very much time in wishing; but I often think, Mrs. Goodwin, that I would like to see my blessed mamma riding in just such a pretty carriage as this. You haven't ever seen my mamma, have you, Mrs. Goodwin?" she asked.

Mrs. Goodwin assured Elsie she had not had that pleasure, and asked her to describe her; and the child attempted to do so, prefacing her description by saying, —

"Well, I think she is the handsomest lady I ever saw;" and added with equal

truth, "Least she was until I saw you, Mrs. Goodwin. Well, now, I 'll describe her to you;" and she began: "She is about as tall as you are, but, of course, she does n't dress in such pretty dresses as you do. She has great blue eyes, — big ones, I mean, — and they always seem to be looking — somewhere! Of course, everybody's eyes look somewhere, unless they are blind; but I know just what I mean, if you don't."

And Mrs. Goodwin saw in fancy the eyes which seem to express present and future in their soulful depths.

"And her hair," continued Elsie, "oh, it is so very light, — not white, I don't mean that; oh, no, my blessed mamma is n't old enough for white hair."

Then, as if in thought, she looked closely at Mrs. Goodwin's pretty curls

that blew about in the summer wind, and added: "Nor you, either; you are n't old enough for white hair, are you, Mrs. Goodwin? How old do people have to be to grow white hair, fairy godmother?" the child asked.

Mrs. Goodwin told Elsie that there was no special age; sometimes hair grew white in a single night, as did that of the Prisoner of Chillon, and was surprised to find that Elsie knew the story, for it was "in her new reading-book," she said.

"Well," Elsie went on, "my mamma has n't very rosy cheeks, but have n't you seen a pretty peach, Mrs. Goodwin, — a white-skinned one, I mean, just as it is getting ripe? I never saw but just one like what I mean, and that was one of Mrs. Blake's wax ones; but Mrs. Blake said it was just like a truly real one growing, and

it looked just like my blessed mamma's cheeks. And then she has pretty white teeth; and when she smiles, oh! when she smiles, why, you feel as if you must kiss her! There," Elsie concluded, "that is my blessed mamma! Now, is n't she handsome, Mrs. Goodwin?"

Satisfaction and admiration showed themselves in her youthful face, and Mrs. Goodwin could n't quite see why Elsie must make an exception in her favor, for she was sure Mrs. Lovelace must be a far prettier woman than she had ever seen reflected in her own mirror. She was delighted, nevertheless, to hear the honest words of the child, and equally pleased to have such a pretty picture so faithfully described.

"I am sure she must be," replied Mrs. Goodwin, "and I shall hope to see her

some day. Why did n't she come with you?" she asked.

"Why, she was n't invited, you know," replied Elsie, with all a child's honesty.

"True, true," rejoined her hostess. "I only thought of Faith's one wish, and I fear I was a little heedless not to remember that your mother might be lonely without such a cheery companion as her little girl. By the way, Elsie, I had word from her through Miss Green to-day, for I telegraphed your safe arrival. We must try to arrange some time for a visit from her."

"Oh, will you, will you, fairy godmother?" cried Elsie, gleefully; and forgetting the berries she was guardian over, she but just rescued them from a renewed acquaintance with their mother earth, as the carriage drew up before Mrs. Harris's door.

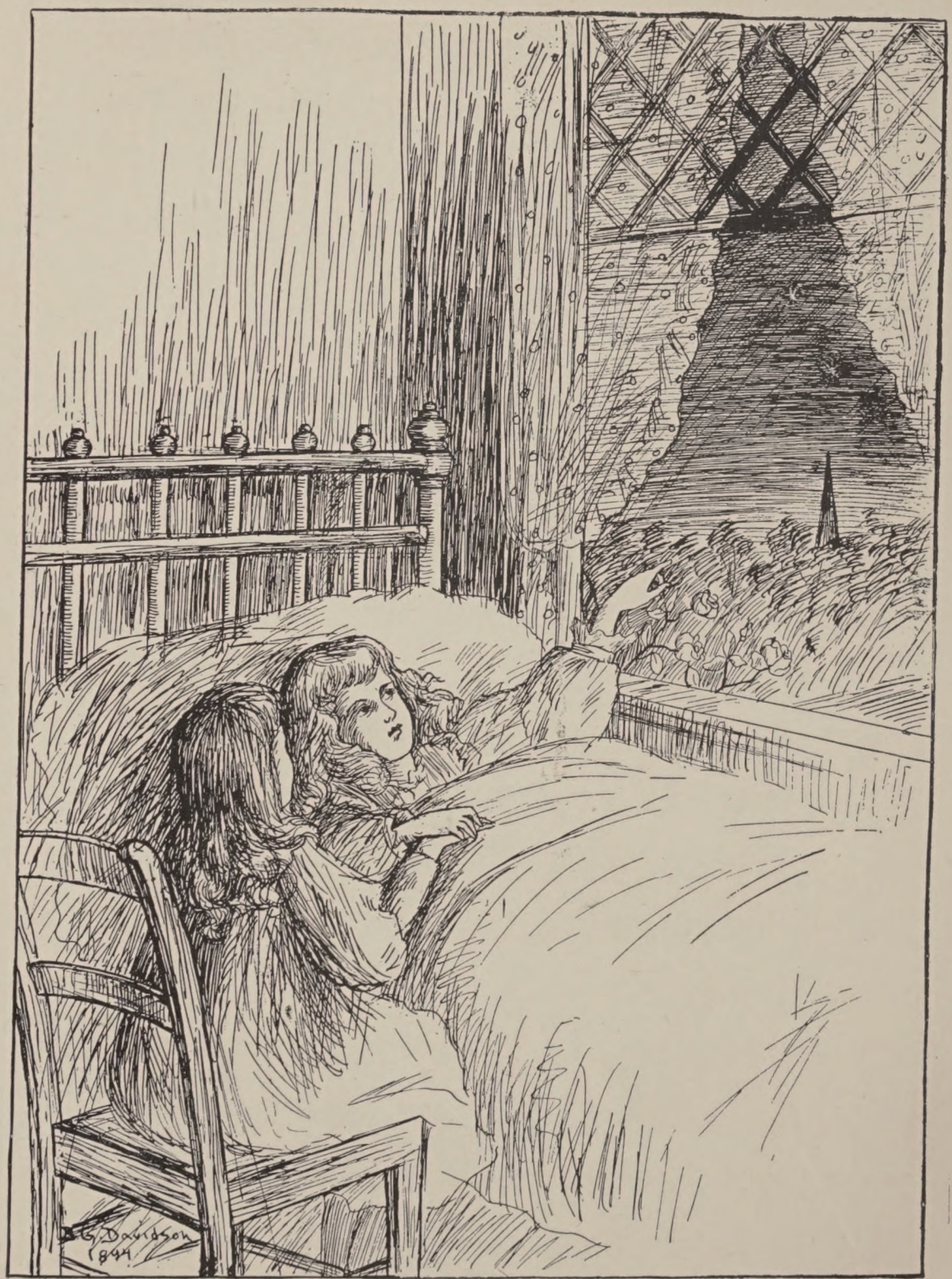
The old lady was of course pleased to see her visitors, and grateful for the goodies and flowers they brought. Surveying Elsie through her gold-rimmed glasses, she said, turning to Mrs. Goodwin, —

"Well, all I can say is, she 's a purty creetur, — purty creetur!"

The call was of necessity a short one, for Mrs. Goodwin excused herself, saying, "I must get home, so that James may drive to the post-office, for I am expecting a very important letter to-night."

So, after wishing the old lady a speedy return to her usual health, never very robust, they drove home, and reached Falcons-height before Faith had finished her supper.

That night, as Faith lay in her little bed, Elsie sat in the twilight with her.



"Twinkle, twinkle, little star." — *Page* 93.

One by one the stars peeped out; and Faith, who since earliest childhood seemed to take pleasure in counting them as they crept out, repeated the words of the little song, —

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star!
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a *lantern* in the sky!"

After pausing a moment, she continued her chat with her little companion, and said, —

"When I was a little wee bit of a girl, sister Elsie, I used to think the stars were peep-holes through the blue sky into heaven; and as I grew older a little, I liked to think that the angels were watching over me, and swinging bright lanterns back and forth, and lighting up the peep-holes. Do you see, Elsie, those two very bright stars over there, by that steeple, just beyond its top?"

Elsie replied that she did.

"Well," continued Faith, "I call them all sky lanterns, and those two I call grandma's and Auntie May's; and some nights when I can't sleep I just like to lie and look at those two stars, and I like, too, to imagine that grandma and Auntie May are watching over me, and their sky lanterns seem brighter than ever these last few days."

CHAPTER VI.

THE next day Mrs. Goodwin told Faith that she had learned that Elsie's birthday came on the same day with hers, the twenty-second.

"Oh, mamma, if I were only well we might have a little party, might n't we?" said Faith.

"Yes, my dear," replied Mrs. Goodwin, "and I have been planning in my mind, ever since Elsie told me, some way that we might make it possible to celebrate the day."

"Oh, do, do, dear mamma! If only Elsie can have a party, I should be so

happy. Can't we plan one for her?" asked Faith, whose face was radiant with smiles.

"Do you think, my little girl, that you would feel able to come to it?" asked her mother.

"Why," replied Faith, "if I am not able to come as company, I can be a looker-on from my window. I suppose the invitations ought to be sent out in my name, though, mamma. Can't I, oh, can't I give it for my little friend? Can't I be the hostess? Is n't that the right word? I can't drive about as fashionable ladies do, and leave the cards of invitation; but why can't you and Elsie do that part right away?"

"Just as my little girl thinks best," replied Mrs. Goodwin.

So it was decided that the invitations

should be written, and delivered from house to house in the afternoon.

"And," said Mrs. Goodwin, "we will so plan it as to reach the station in time for the afternoon train from the city, for I want to get a bundle that is coming on it for me."

Judge Goodwin offered to become the amanuensis of the hour, and forty little notes on dainty rose-colored paper read as follows: —

Miss Goodwin invites you to be present at a birthday garden-party given in honor of her friend, Miss Lovelace, and also to celebrate her own birthday, on June twenty-second, from two till five P. M.

Mrs. Goodwin thought the invitation a little formal; but Faith insisted it ought to read like those of "truly grown up people."

After luncheon, Mrs. Goodwin proposed to Elsie that she put on her little pink challi, and her hat with the pretty roses; and placing the notes in a little basket, they started to deliver them.

Only Elsie got out of the carriage; and it was fast nearing the hour of the afternoon train, when she left at the minister's house the last note from the basket.

"And now, James," said Mrs. Goodwin, "drive quickly to the station; for I see the engine in the distance, and I would not miss the train any more than as if I were going on it myself."

Turning to Elsie, she said, —

"I not only expect a bundle, but I expect another visitor to Falcons-height."

"Another visitor!" thought Elsie, as she said within herself, "Oh, dear, now I must be the companion, I suppose!" But Mrs.

Elsie leaves the last note at the minister's. — *Page* 98.

Goodwin brought the smiles back to her face by saying,—

"I am expecting a lady friend of Miss Green's."

Just as she said this, the engine blew its shrill whistle, and the train halted in the station, and one by one the passengers alighted.

Mrs. Goodwin held Elsie's hand, but felt its clasp loosen, and the little girl went running down the platform, and without heeding any one ran to the side of a lady who held out her arms to clasp her; and Elsie and her mother were entirely unmindful of all but their own happiness.

"Oh, mamma, mamma, my blessed mamma, what have you come for? How did you get here? Where are you going?" asked Elsie, all in one breath; and before

Mrs. Lovelace could reply, Mrs. Goodwin clasped her visitor's hand, and turning to Elsie, answered all the little girl's questions, saying, —

"Your mother has come to visit me, at my invitation, dear."

Elsie in her childish delight kissed first the hand of one and then the other. It was a genuine surprise, as Mrs. Goodwin intended it should be.

When they were safely on their way to Falcons-height, Elsie asked Mrs. Goodwin how it was that she got word to her mother so quickly.

"I sent a note by Mr. Jackson to Miss Green the night of the Seventeenth, and last night I received an answer," replied Mrs. Goodwin.

"Then you did invite her before I told you she did n't come with me because

she was not asked, did n't you, fairy godmother?" said Elsie.

"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Goodwin. "The day you told me that your birthday was to be the same day with Faith's, I resolved that your good mother should not have to hoard any kisses for your return, but should give them to you as she has always done on your birthday."

"We cannot thank you enough for your kindness," said Mrs. Lovelace, speaking for both Elsie and herself. "I hope I may be able to make myself useful during my short stay at Falcons-height."

"No," replied her hostess, — "no, you are to be solely ornamental, as I am sure you will be, for I quite agree with Elsie in her description of her blessed mamma."

"Oh, yes, mamma, I told Mrs. Goodwin just how you looked; and did n't I tell the

truth, fairy godmother?" said Elsie, turning with manifest satisfaction to Mrs. Goodwin.

"Yes, you were quite right, little girl," replied the latter, and turning, she added to Mrs. Lovelace, "Yonder, Mrs. Lovelace, is my only child — my one little girl — at the window."

"Oh, yes, mamma," interrupted Elsie, "and she is just an angel, too;" then she added thoughtfully, "But I'm glad she isn't a truly angel, though."

"The two little girls seem to have become quite well acquainted," said Mrs. Lovelace; and Mrs. Goodwin added, —

"Yes, and quite fond of each other too."

"Yes," said Elsie. "Faith and I are sisters, — sisters for a week, I mean; but truly, mamma, I didn't call her so first, not until

she first called me her sister, for I remembered, blessed mamma, just what you told me; but the moment I looked at her, I just wanted to put my arms around her neck, and beg her to let me be her sister; and just as I was wishing it, her little sweet voice (oh, you should hear it!) said, 'Come, little sister, and kiss me,' and you may believe she did not have to speak twice, mamma."

"For you were all ready, little daughter, were n't you?" said Mrs. Lovelace.

"Oh, yes, indeed. I love her next best to you, blessed mamma. I can, can't I?" said Elsie.

Mrs. Lovelace excused Elsie's enthusiasm to Mrs. Goodwin, saying,—

"My little daughter has lived so long with older people that I shall enjoy seeing her happiness with her young companion."

Leading her mother by the hand, Elsie entered Faith's room with the words, —

"Now see *my* blessed mamma," with a marked emphasis on the "my;" and added, "Is n't she most as beautiful as yours, sister Faith?"

And the little white hand of the invalid grasped that of Elsie's mother, as she rejoined, —

"Yes, indeed, little sister, she looks exactly as I expected she would. But what a surprise for us all! Now you can stay longer with me, can't you?"

Mrs. Lovelace was duly presented to Judge Goodwin, and her advent into the family was greeted with cordiality everywhere, for even Rachel added her unasked-for criticism, —

"Bress de Lor', if she done don't look jes' like a pictur', but I reck'ned she might."

CHAPTER VII.

THE next day was Sunday; and Elsie, as she awoke to it, wondered how she should spend it. At home she always went to church and Sunday-school; but the little chapel of St. John was far away, and she was not quite sure if the Goodwins took their horses out on Sunday, and yet, she reasoned, it was the only way of getting to church.

"Mamma," she asked, "do you think I could walk four miles, — or it would be eight miles if I walked home, would n't it?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Lovelace, "that is good arithmetic, little daughter, but I have not the same confidence in your athletics, for I hardly think your little feet could cover eight miles even in a day; but I am sure that these good people will help us out of the difficulty, so we will go down to breakfast, and see what are their plans for the day.

"Hark!" she said, "I hear the chimes, Elsie. Do you hear them, and can you tell me the hymn they are playing?"

"Yes, mamma," replied Elsie; and her gentle voice kept time to the music of the bells, as she sang, "O Paradise, O Paradise."

"Probably there is an early service, at St. John's," said her mother.

Their plans for the day were all made by Judge Goodwin, as he announced, at

breakfast, that the horses would be at the door at quarter of ten to take all who would like to go to church.

"Perhaps you object to riding on Sunday, Mrs. Lovelace," he said; and the latter answered readily, —

"We never have the opportunity, Judge, so our consciences have never stood the test; and I see plainly it must be riding, or staying at home from church, and the right will, I am sure, cancel any wrong in this case. I really should like to go to the church that has such a musical chime of bells as I have heard this morning calling us there. What is the clergyman's name, Judge?"

"Oldrive, — Rev. Walter Oldrive," answered Judge Goodwin.

"Walter Oldrive," repeated Mrs. Lovelace, thoughtfully. "I knew a clergyman

of that name once, but he was an Englishman."

"Yes, Mr. Oldrive is an Englishman too, and comes from Southampton. Was he your rector there? or perhaps you have never been in England?" said the Judge; and Mrs. Lovelace replied, —

"I was born there, only a few miles from London; my husband's family still live there, and after his death I remained with them for a year."

"How long have you been in this country, Mrs. Lovelace?" asked the host.

"Less than seven years, sir. It was while my husband was in business in Southampton that I knew Mr. Oldrive as my rector," said Mrs. Lovelace, adding: "The name is an uncommon one; still it may not be, no doubt is not, the same gentleman."

"I am not so sure of that, Mrs. Lovelace," returned Judge Goodwin. "Stranger things befall us. But we will start soon; so may I ask you to be ready?"

The little chapel of St. John's was a quaint one; and Mrs. Lovelace, as she entered it, was startled to see in it a reproduction of that other little chapel at Southampton.

Its very simplicity was attractive. The altar and the font were both decorated with white lilacs, whose perfume filled the church; and as the white-robed choristers entered singing the beautiful hymn, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," each boy's hymnal had between its leaves a drooping bunch of the same fragrant white flower.

Mrs. Lovelace gave one glance at the rector's face, and recognized her old friend

of Southampton, and felt at home, even though the sight of him made her think of those happy days of old England.

Memories of those hours crowded in for the moment, and disturbed her peace; but the beautiful service soon recalled her to herself, and when it was over she whispered gently to Mrs. Goodwin that she would like to speak with Mr. Oldrive if she should not delay her good friends too long.

"No, no, indeed; by all means, speak with him; I will introduce you to him if you wish," said Mrs. Goodwin.

But there was little need of that, for Mr. Oldrive had discovered Mrs. Lovelace in the congregation, and waited to welcome her. His greeting was a hearty one, as he said with surprise,—

"Why, why, why, my good lady, and

how did you find us all in this little out-of-the-way village?"

Mrs. Lovelace answered that it was due to Judge and Mrs. Goodwin's kindness.

"I 'll warrant it," replied the minister, "for they are responsible for all the good and happiness that comes to this little town. And how is the baby? Let me see, her name was —"

"Elsie," prompted Mrs. Lovelace; "but she is quite a girl now —"

"Of course, of course, for that was some years ago," said Mr. Oldrive.

"Yes, here she is," said Mrs. Lovelace, as she introduced her little girl. "My little daughter, Mr. Oldrive. Elsie," she added, "this is the good man who was my kind friend when I was most in need of one."

"And am still, Mrs. Lovelace," said Mr. Oldrive; then, turning to the Goodwins, who stood silent witnesses to the happy meeting, he said with a knowing twinkle in his bright eye: "You are entertaining an angel unawares, I think you will find; but I will not longer detain you, for I shall call to-morrow with Mrs. Oldrive to talk of old times, Mrs. Lovelace. Good morning, all."

The sun was so high and hot, on the return drive, that Judge Goodwin suggested that James take the road through the woods, and spare the horses as much as possible.

So slowly did they drive that it was quite near dinner-time when they arrived at Falcons-height, and their hearts were cheered to see Faith once again downstairs; not as before on the piazza, how-

ever, but seated as if in state under the spreading branches of the apple-trees.

Rachel with her usual thoughtfulness had ready for them a pitcher of ice-cool lemonade, and the party alighted and drank, under the apple-trees.

"Well, well, well, my little girl," said the devoted father, with the smile of delight plainly visible upon his face; "I hardly know what next to expect. Little Elsie seems to have worked a marvellous cure with you already."

"Yes," replied Faith, "and her medicine is sweet and pleasant too, dear papa; I really do feel better since she came."

But the devoted Rachel, who was a close observer of Faith's every mood, was not to be deceived, for she knew too well that the little invalid was making an extra effort, to brighten up Elsie's short visit.

The afternoon was spent out under the trees, and Elsie and her mother asked to be excused towards sunset to take a walk; for to both the country was a revelation, and God in nature was almost as impressive to them as God in church worship.

They wandered on towards the lake, and sat watching the reflections in its bosom. The frogs began their croaking; and to Elsie their noise was as ugly as it was new, and she asked, —

"Oh, mamma, what does make their voices sound so hoarse? Is it because they live in such damp homes, I wonder? I should think they would put the birds all out of tune."

"Not so, little daughter," replied her mother; "for when the frogs commence their concert, the birds have finished

theirs, and one frog can make as much noise as a tree-full of birds. But see," she added, "here comes Judge Goodwin looking for us, I fear."

"Ah, here you are, stragglers!" said their host. "Mrs. Goodwin has sent me out to look you up, for she feared you might have lost your way."

"Oh, how I shall reproach myself for giving her one moment of anxiety! Let us hasten our steps, that we may relieve her from further care," said Mrs. Lovelace, penitently.

Elsie quietly made her way to one side of Judge Goodwin, and slipped her tiny hand into his manly one, saying, as she did so,—

"Will you be my fairy godfather, Judge Goodwin? Your wife is my fairy godmother, you know."

"Will I be your fairy godfather?" laughingly repeated the good man. "Is there anything very fairy-like about me?" he asked.

And Elsie, as she looked up at the tall figure overshadowing hers, every inch a judge, felt that if the fairies were as large as he, they would have a hard time to crowd into a lily's cup or hide under a lichen. She answered, —

"Well, sir, then you will be my giant godfather, won't you?"

Judge Goodwin, bending tenderly down to the little mite of humanity, kissed her and answered, —

"I will be to you more, my dear, for I will be as a real father; and when your mother consents, our home is open to you both, for we have all learned to love you, little girl. You have brought new life to

"'Is there anything very fairy-like about me?'"—*Page* 118.

us all. But here we are at home, and yonder, over the lawn, comes my good wife to meet us."

Mrs. Lovelace begged forgiveness for taxing her kind hostess's nerves to such an extent, and went forward to meet the latter. Placing in her hands a large bunch of wild roses, she said sweetly, —

"Let this be my peace offering, fair hostess."

"No offence, my good friend," replied Mrs. Goodwin. "I only feared for your safety, for I am afraid I did not have much confidence in your memory and bump of locality, or — was I lonely? Perhaps I might add that I was; for you and your little girl have brought such a sweet atmosphere into our quiet home that I am a beggar for your every smile."

"Yes, good wife," added Judge Good-

win, "I have taken the first step, as you suggested last evening, and I leave you to talk with Mrs. Lovelace of our plans. To-morrow or next day will be a good time to talk them up. Now we will go into the house, and have our usual Sunday-night sing. Has Faith gone to bed, wife?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Goodwin, "she left a good-night for you all, and a kiss for her little sister Elsie."

The evening was spent in the singing of hymns; and as the voices of the trio blended in harmony to the beautiful words of Saint Bernard of Cluny, —

> "Jerusalem, the golden,
> With milk and honey blest;
> Beneath thy contemplation
> Sink heart and voice oppressed,"

when they reached its ending, they heard an echo from above stairs, as Faith's

voice chimed in with the others at the verse, —

"And they who with their Leader
Have conquered in the fight,
Forever and forever
Are clad in robes of white."

And as the little company closed with the singing of the "Amen," every heart felt that the words were fully interpreted by the saintly Faith, who had fought the battle of life with heroism and patience beyond her years, and with all a woman's strength and hope.

CHAPTER VIII.

ND this is the day of the week," said Mrs. Goodwin to her guests as they entered the breakfast-room the next morning, — "the day that we are reminded forcibly of our native element of dust; yes, this is the day when it costs us an effort to forget it. I never did like washing-day, from a child up. I always seem to taste its condiments in our very food. Even Cook seems to feel it a day of penance, for I sometimes think, in her eagerness to beat her tattoo at the tubs and to preside over them con-

scientiously, she forgets that we are mortal, and need food. If you are not so well fed to-day as usual, it is due to that very commonplace fact that it is washing-day, — good Saxon words, though possibly inelegant."

"And what can I do for your pleasure to-day, Mrs. Goodwin? May I not help you a little, and thus feel myself of use?" asked Mrs. Lovelace, as she seated herself at table.

"Have a care, my good lady, how freely you offer your services in these busy times," rejoined Mrs. Goodwin, with a laugh.

"But I offer in all sincerity, mine hostess," said Mrs. Lovelace, "for I hardly know how to be idle, mine is such a busy life. So bid me do your will, Mrs. Goodwin."

"Well, I accept," said the latter in reply,

"for later I shall take you into a secret. But here come the dressmaker and the seamstress up the walk now; so meet us in the sewing-room in two hours, if you will, and I will whisper in your ear. Meantime perhaps you and Elsie would like to go out and see Robert the gardener cut the flowers from the conservatory, for he begs that he may be decorator and florist for to-morrow."

"And oh, may I help?" said Mrs. Lovelace, eagerly. "I have such a pretty idea that I would so like to carry out. Tell me, please, that I may be an assistant to Robert," urged Mrs. Lovelace.

"Yes, you will be of great help, I am sure, in that line; so after breakfast run out and make your application to Robert to go into partnership with him," said Mrs. Goodwin; and her guest answered, —

"No, I shall apply only for an apprenticeship;" and later, as Robert sauntered along through the heavily laden plants of the conservatory, he heard a quick step following him. Turning, he saw hurrying behind him Mrs. Lovelace, with a pink sunbonnet on her head, and carrying a basket, while a long pair of shears hung dangling at her side. He raised his hat politely, and said, —

"Good-morning, my lady. Do you want a few flowers? It 's only a very few I can give you this day, for to-morrow is the day of the party, and there is not a plant here but would give its every flower for the festival."

"Yes, good gardener Robert; and that is why I am come, to beg that you will give me an apprenticeship. Won't you please let me help you, Robert?" urged

Mrs. Lovelace. "I want to do my share, — something, anything; and, too, I have such a pretty plan. I promise I won't interfere with any of yours, but you will, I am sure, agree to help me. Where can I find some daisies, I wonder?" she asked.

"Down in old Farmer Allen's fields. He has just let them grow wild, because he says he loves them so," said the gardener.

"And will you be going that way to-day, I wonder, Robert?" asked Mrs. Lovelace.

"Yes, ma'am, that I will, and soon too," replied Robert, "for I have to go to the village on an errand right away."

"And will you take a big half-bushel basket, to fill for me?" continued the lady.

"Whew! a half-bushel basketful of daisies!" said Robert, and a long shrill

whistle told the enormity of the request. "Why," he added, "Farmer Allen will have me up before the magistrate for trespassing at wholesale."

"No, no," rejoined Mrs. Lovelace, "you must see Farmer Allen first, of course, and tell him we want some daisies for Faith's and," she added meekly, "my little girl's birthday."

"That I will, and I will bring the daisies, or I don't come back at all, ma'am."

"One more thing," continued Mrs. Lovelace. "Robert, where is that big white sun umbrella I saw over your wagon Saturday afternoon, as we passed you on your way from the village?" and Robert replied, —

"Why, ma'am, it is on the wagon still, I hope; for if ever it be of use, it

will be to-day, for my friend Fahrenheit holds his head high in the world this morning."

"Yes," added Mrs. Lovelace, "and it will be of use to-morrow, too, good Robert, for I want to ask the loan of it."

"Bless you, lady, it is yours," rejoined Robert, readily; and he called to James, who stood outside, to "unfasten that white umbrella on the village wagon and give —"

"Tut, tut, tut!" interrupted the visitor; "no, not until you return from the village, for I cannot use it until you bring me the daisies anyway. So remember, Robert, you and I are partners and decorators. I will see you on your return. You will need the umbrella this hot day."

Raising his hat, as the lady left, Robert said to James, "It seems as if since those

two people came, Miss Faith was living another life."

Faith and Elsie, meanwhile, had been amusing each other. Dollie Dorothy was still sitting in the pretty doll-house, with a dignity enforced by stiff joints, for Faith said she must be a visitor as long as her mistress was one. "And, oh, dear sister Elsie, I do wish you would visit me forever. You are so much company for mamma when I can't be, and do you know, I think mamma has lost her heart upon your mother?" said Faith, and added: "We should be such a happy family, should n't we, little sister? To-morrow mamma is going to talk with you both about living with us forever."

Elsie, with a judgment beyond her years, gained by her life with her elders, could only listen. It was not for her to

say anything, fearing she might say the "very wrongest thing," as she afterwards told her mother, "for, you know, mamma, I really would always like to live with you, and sister Faith, and my fairy godmother, and my giant godfather, and the roses, and the birds, and — everything so real!"

While Faith and Elsie sat in this happy way, Rachel entered the room, and with her usual devotion asked her little mistress, —

"Now, missy, what can Nurse Rachel do to-day for you? Bress de chile!" she said, turning to Elsie. "I would crawl on my ugly black hands to serve missy, and be sassifried if she would only crack a smile to me now and then."

"No need of that, good nursey. Only put me in my wheel-carriage, and we will all go for a little walk; that is, you and

Elsie will walk, and I will ride;" and she tried to laugh, but to-day it seemed a failure, Rachel thought.

"Rat-tat-tat!" at the sewing-room, and Mrs. Lovelace entered to find Mrs. Goodwin in council with the dressmaker and the seamstress, and all three hidden behind a cloud of spotted muslin.

"Ah, now," she said, "I am where I know I can be of use; so command me, please."

"Yes, you really can, my good friend," replied Mrs. Goodwin; "and now for the secret;" and she took Mrs. Lovelace one side, and gave her her orders. "Don't tell! No, not a word of thanks to-day, Mrs. Lovelace, not before to-morrow, anyway. I only ask your help to-day for two hours more; and then —"

"And then I can keep my appointment

with Robert," interrupted Mrs. Lovelace. "Yes, there he goes to the village."

"And pray what are you and Robert going to do?" asked her hostess.

"We are the decorators for the birthday *fête*. Can you trust us?" asked Mrs. Lovelace.

"Yes, indeed, and you are at liberty to do what you will, use what you will, and — work as long as you will!" said Mrs. Goodwin; "and now for your thimble," she said, with a merry laugh.

"And here it is, my good and tried friend, — always at my side, you see," said Mrs. Lovelace, taking a well-worn silver thimble from her pocket.

The busy women worked so industriously that the spotted muslin took pretty shapes, and two dainty little muslin frocks rested on the bed all finished as

the tea-bell rang. But Mrs. Lovelace had adapted herself to other work, and at the end of the two hours she had promised Mrs. Goodwin, had joined Robert in the conservatory, who pointed with pride at the heaping basketful of beautiful white daisies.

"There, there you are, my lady! Enough, I wonder?" he asked with interest.

"Plenty, and in abundance; but what did Farmer Allen say to such a destruction of his pets?" said Mrs. Lovelace, as she picked from the basket a bunch of the pretty flowers, and fastened it to her waist

"Why, ma'am, I just told him we were to have a party up here to-morrow, and we wanted some daisies," rejoined Robert; "and what do you think, ma'am," he continued, "he insisted upon helping me, and said, if anything in his poor life could

give pleasure at Falcons-height, he would give it with a will. So here they are, ma'am."

"And now get the umbrella, Robert, please, will you?" said Mrs. Lovelace, "and leave me to myself. You can trust me with your children, the flowers, can't you?"

"That I can, my lady," answered the gardener; "and here is an extra pair of shears," he added laughingly, "to use when yours get dull."

Industriously Mrs. Lovelace worked on, till the tea-bell summoned her, as it did the other busy workers, to supper.

She asked to be excused early in the evening, saying she wanted to retire early, "that she might rise with the birds."

On the way to their chamber, she and Elsie stepped into Faith's pretty room, and delayed a moment to chat with the

little girl, who was as usual lost in contemplation of her constant friends, the sky lanterns. She said to Mrs. Lovelace, who bent over to kiss her, —

"Don't you like birthdays, Mrs. Lovelace? They come so seldom, don't they?"

"And is n't once a year often enough?" replied Mrs. Lovelace.

"Why, no, not if they bring such a happy day as to-morrow will be, I am sure," said Faith; "and," continued she, "I do hope I can stay out a little while. I am going to try to sleep hard to-night, so I may be with my little friends to-morrow. Good-night, Mrs. Lovelace, and good-night, dear little sister. To-morrow, you and I will be a year older than to-day, only think! Good-night, all. Good-night, my dear sky friends, my bright sky lanterns."

CHAPTER IX.

THE birthday morning dawned bright and beautifully fair, as if Nature herself were an interested party in the coming *fête*. The birds sang clear and sweet, and it was no difficult matter to make of their "Chirr-up, chirr-up," a call to the sleepers, "Wake up, wake up, chirr-up."

Elsie could not be said to be of the sleepers, for she had been awake long before the birds commenced their matins, but did not stir, not wishing to waken her mother. She had just begun to

think she could not keep quiet longer, when she felt a strong arm thrown around her neck, and the kisses fell upon her soft cheek, — one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, — and heard her mother's greeting, —

"Many happy days for my little daughter!"

"Thank you, blessed mamma," said Elsie, in return. "I wish I could steal into Faith's room, and give her the same greeting of kisses; not the same kisses, you know, mamma, but some of my own."

But it was thought best not to disturb Faith quite so early, and Mrs. Lovelace said, —

"You know she will have an uncommonly exciting day for her, and will need extra strength and sleep. I thought

last night," continued Mrs. Lovelace, "that her little eyes looked dull, and she seemed very weary."

"Do you know, mamma," said Elsie, "if it would only make Faith well, I believe I would be willing to take her place for a while. I know I should never be so patient as she is, for do you notice Faith never says, 'I wish I could do so or so,' but 't is always '*If* I could do so or so.' I asked her one day if she did not get very tired, and she answered me, 'Oh, yes, Elsie; but don't you ever get tired too, I wonder?' and I have never heard her murmur once at her lameness. Rachel told me the other day how it all happened, and she cried so hard I had to try to quiet her; but I could not comfort her at all, and when Faith heard her crying, she wheeled along

so quietly in her chair that we never saw her until she called, 'Nursey, Nursey Rachel, I am lonesome without you, for I do love you so!' Oh, mamma, I wish you could have seen the smile that lighted up Rachel's black face! Why, mamma, it just shone, and she ran away saying,—

"'Bress dat chile! Bress dat chile! I'se her slave till the Judgment Day comes to one of us, shuah. Nebber min' if Massa Lincoln did give me my freedom papers.'"

"And how did it all happen, Elsie?" asked Mrs. Lovelace.

"Why, it was one morning that Rachel was taking Faith to ride in her baby-carriage," replied Elsie; "and some boys and girls were chasing a big Newfoundland dog. He ran like mad, Rachel told

me, and rushed right across the street between her and the carriage, and fairly separated it from her, and it just went of its own speed over the curbstone, and the baby fell out. It was thought at first that Faith was killed, but when they took her home they found her still alive; but her spine was injured. For a time it was thought Rachel would be crazy, mamma, she grieved so; but Judge and Mrs. Goodwin were so kind to her that she got better, and I don't believe she will ever leave Faith unless —" added Elsie in subdued tones — "Faith leaves her. Is n't it a sad story, mamma?"

"Yes, little daughter," answered Mrs. Lovelace; "but still Faith is so very cheery that she makes one forget her many daily sacrifices. But, see, the sun is up altogether too high, and I have

work to do in the garden. Let us dress quietly, and I will go down."

Elsie tried to move noiselessly about the room; but do her very best her shoes would squeak, and things would fall on the floor, and she felt almost guilty when Faith's knock came on the door. Elsie knew it was Faith's, for the rubber tires on her wheel chair could not quite hide the fact of her presence near.

Elsie opened the door quickly; and Faith, whose lap was full of roses, just tossed them recklessly at her little visitor. They fell about her a literal shower of roses; and the two children laughed merrily, as the pink little messengers fell speaking their fragrant messages.

The children themselves were not wanting in words, and it was difficult to tell which spoke the louder and faster.

"A Happy New Year to you!" "Many happy returns of our birthday!" "Happy days for you, and happy days for me!" were a few of the greetings from one to the other.

It was, in truth, a very pretty sight to see the two little girls exchange kisses. Faith put up her small white hands on Elsie's cheeks, and counted, one by one, the ten kisses she bestowed upon them; while Elsie, leaning over tenderly, imprinted five on each cheek of the little invalid, and added the eleventh upon her lips, — "for luck," she said.

Rachel looked in at that moment, and taking the hand of each little girl in her big black one, said, —

"Chilluns, I must kiss you both, but this is the place for my kisses."

"Yes," said the two children in one

voice, "where we can hold them tight, Rachel;" and Rachel's modesty received a meaning she little dreamed for it.

"Now, Miss Elsie, run down to your breakfast, while you, Missy Faith, had best eat yours and then lie down, honey, till you have to dress for the acception," said Rachel.

Poor Rachel! had she been contented to speak of the day's coming festivities as the children's party it really was to be, would not have been guilty of the mistake, but she had often said, "A party was nothing but a party; but an acception was — more!" but her explanation was so obscure it was hard to tell what extra dignity graced an "acception."

As Elsie entered the breakfast-room, Judge and Mrs. Goodwin stood waiting to give her their birthday greetings.

"Many, many happy returns of this glorious June birthday, little girl!" said they in unison; and Elsie, as she attempted to sit down in her chair, found it impossible to do so before removing from it many tempting-looking bundles; while at her plate glistened a new silver set of knife, fork, and spoon, all bearing the inscription "Elsie Lovelace, from her giant godfather and fairy godmother."

Elsie, to whom such lovely things were unknown, was too surprised to say anything, and when her mother reminded her of her neglect, looked up with tears of joy on her face, and said in childish innocence, "I'm too happy to talk, mamma. You tell them how kind they are;" and Mrs. Lovelace herself found it difficult to express in well-chosen words her gratification to the kind friends whose

lives were spent in doing good for others.

After breakfast was over, each member of the family seemed to have a duty to perform. Mrs. Goodwin went to the kitchen to interview Sarah the cook; Mrs. Lovelace and Robert flitted back and forth from the conservatory, their smiling faces hidden behind roses and flowers of every hue; Mr. Goodwin laughingly said, as he betook himself to his library, that he was "going to prepare his speech;" and Elsie became a general messenger about the house and lawns.

Rachel seemed to feel her care over her little mistress doubled, and followed almost her every look. She amused her, as she only could, with stories of the war in Dixie, and interspersed them with plantation songs.

"Oh, mamma, mamma!" called Elsie, as she went to her room, after dinner, to dress, "do, do come upstairs! Be quick!" for Mrs. Lovelace was putting the finishing touches in the wide front hall, and twining the balusters with greenery and flowers. She left at Elsie's call, and joined the latter in her room.

"Oh, do, do see, mamma! Is there any end to my birthday presents, I wonder? Look, look here!" cried the little girl, excitedly. "Look at this lovely muslin dress on my bed. Can it be for me? and yet, here, read what this bit of a note says. No, I will read it to you, mamma: 'To my god-daughter, Elsie Lovelace.' And see," she continued, — "see this lovely hat with its white satin bows and white roses, and see all these pretty ribbons, — one for my hair, and one for my sash;" and Elsie

danced about the room with joy. "Oh, I never was quite so happy before, mamma. I don't mean that I was never happy, but somehow, if you feel real happy, you want to look just right every way, and a pretty dress is like — "

"Like the fine feathers that make fine birds?" interrupted her mother, teasingly.

"No, mamma, I don't mean just that; but I mean that when we are happy, if we look well, it all helps to tell how we feel. You know what I mean, don't you, blessed mamma?"

Mrs. Lovelace answered that she understood, and had no fear that her little daughter would be spoiled by vanity, "for," she said, "it is right that we should look as well as we can; but dress you, little daughter, quickly, so that before the

children come, you may go and thank the giver, — the Lady Bountiful."

And indeed the little girl did look a picture of perfect happiness and innocence. Her long golden hair, tied with its bow of white satin ribbon, fell around her shoulders, and the simplicity of the little white muslin frock was a suitable setting for the sweetness of her face and the purity of soul indicated in it.

She hurried to Mrs. Goodwin's room, and knocked gently.

"Come in," was the answer from within; and stealing up to the side of that lady, she said, —

"Look, quick, quick, my fairy godmother, for I 'm so afraid I 'm in fairyland, reading a fairy story! Oh, shall I have to be indoors at five o'clock, do you think, or else lose all these pretty

things? You are so kind, I don't know what to say, and so I 've come to have you say what you think of me and everything!"

Mrs. Goodwin looked at the sweet face appealing to her, and for a moment a look of sadness came into her own, — only for a moment, though, for the smiles came to her rescue, and she said pleasantly, —

"I have two little girls instead of one, have I not? Have you seen Faith yet, and is she dressed for the afternoon?" she asked.

"No, ma'am," replied Elsie. "Nurse Rachel guards her door, like a big black bear; and when I peeped a bit into the room, as I was passing, she said, 'Shut that do'! You can't come in now, Miss. There 's just as fine a little lady here as some others;' and so I ran away. But

there go Rachel and Faith. Let us run down to the piazza and see them. Sha'n't we?"

They joined Faith and her devoted attendant on the lawn; and Mrs. Goodwin walked up to the side of her little girl, and bent and kissed her, as she had done so many times on this beautiful June birthday.

Elsie could only stand spellbound at the lovely picture that the little invalid made! Her face always had a spirituelle look, as if it were only a veil that hid her from the angels, and the wreath of white roses on her head seemed like a crown.

The little wheel-carriage was ornamental with its display of flowers. There was nothing about it as a reminder of the sacrifices that its owner had always had

to make. Its artistic beauty in decoration drove away every such intruding thought.

"Yes, here is the very triumph of art," said Judge Goodwin.

The sides of the wheel-carriage were festooned with smilax and flowers, while around the hubs of the wheels was a wreath of white daisies. Over the head of the little girl was the large cotton umbrella, but so disguised that it was hard to tell its original make; for around its edge was a fringe of smilax, and its top was completely hidden by a covering of white daisies. From the front of the carriage extended two long wide white satin ribbons, and Faith asked in her merry way, —

"Where are my horses, if these are my reins?"

"They will be here presently," re-

plied Mrs. Lovelace, in the same happy vein.

Soon the little visitors began to arrive. All along the road could be seen the unpretentious carriages of the villagers, bearing their burdens of little people; white dresses dotted the procession, and pretty ribbons fluttered in the wind.

There were Bessie Barrett, and Rose Osgood, and the twin sisters, Alice and Edith Lawrence, and the minister's two children, Margaret and Mary Oldrive; and a goodly number of boys too. Ned Ashton and Harry Bates and Ray Hunt and Cecil Heywood made a merry quartet in the latter's village-cart, and, in short, the whole forty guests had come, — not one regret was received by the little hostesses. Every one seemed as happy as the day was bright.

And what a pretty sight it was to see Faith's carriage as it started for the arbor, which Robert had decorated for the festival! One of the white ribbons was held by a line of little girls, and the other by the boys, and each guest had fastened a bunch of flowers to the ribbons by delicate threads, so that the ribbons seemed more like a floral chain.

Faith's lap was heaped with the tributes that her little friends had brought to her guest and herself. Elsie walked by the side of Faith, and it was hard to decide which made the more attractive picture. Certainly there was nothing to show that Faith was not so strong as the others, for her cheeks wore the hectic flush of excitement, and her face was radiant with smiles! She looked rather like some queen of the flower-garden, riding in state, and guarded by her loyal subjects.

Rachel, in spotless cap and apron and neat black dress, guided the procession in her accustomed place, at the back of Faith's chair. Only laughter and merriment were heard everywhere.

Mrs. Lovelace and Robert had transformed the grape-arbor into a realm of fairy-land, making of it a throne-room fit for any queen of the fairies. Flowers were everywhere; and the initials of the two little hostesses were woven together in bright flowers, and made a pretty background for such a picture.

Judge Goodwin's tall form towered over the little people, and made them look like pygmies; and as he came forward to speak, he was greeted by such an outburst of cheering from the children that he said in an aside, smilingly,—

"Children, this is not my birthday; and

"Judge Goodwin's tall form towered over the little people." — *Page* 156.

when you get to be as old as I am, you will be glad to forget the birthdays, I'm thinking." Silence being restored, he continued: "Children, it seems almost an absurdity for two little ladies like Miss Lovelace and Miss Goodwin" (and he repeated the names with mock gravity,) "to have to call upon a gray-haired old man like me to make the opening speech to their guests at their party. They do not seem to be very strong for woman's rights; but, jesting aside, it gives me — all of us, I may say — great pleasure to celebrate this beautiful June day in such a way as is planned for you by your hostesses."

He was interrupted by brave Ned Ashton, who cried out, "Three cheers for our hostesses!" and they were given with a will that proved that little people can be

heard as well as seen, when the proper time offers.

"And now," continued Judge Goodwin, "it has been planned that we have our strawberry-festival on the lawn, yonder, before it is too late for my little girl; so roam where you will; swing and play games; and down by the lake are five trustworthy good stout men, who will take you in the boats on the water, but you must mind their orders, as you would those of your father or mother. Run away now, until the trumpet calls you to strawberries and cream."

The children seemed to feel that not only their first duty, but as well their greatest pleasure, was to be found in hovering about Faith and Elsie; and the former was very graceful in her introductions of her merry guests to her

"little friend and foster-sister Elsie," as she proudly called the little stranger.

Mrs. Lovelace and Mrs. Goodwin were everywhere, and the children made the garden ring with the happy laughter of innocent childhood.

It was a source of great merriment to all to see the giant form of Judge Goodwin dodging the little people at their game of "tag" around the trees of Falcons-height.

At the appointed hour the trumpet sounded, and across the lawn, up from the lake, and all along the driveway scampered the little people, and gathered around the long table beneath the overhanging trees.

And how tempting it looked! It was heavily laden with strawberries and sweets. At either end sat Faith and Elsie, and

both were almost hidden by the beautiful floral pieces that had exhausted every originality of Robert the gardener.

The older ones waited patiently upon the little people. After all had done their duty faithfully to the goodies upon the table, at Faith's request, those who had birthdays in the same month of June were asked to raise their hands; and Ned Ashton and Bessie Barrett uplifted theirs above the heads of the company.

Still Faith had another request to make, and that was that those whose birthdays came in the same month of June should tell a little story, and in that story should express what they wished for most.

Judge Goodwin, fearing that the two children might be frightened at the thought of such a seemingly serious task, said, —

"Children, I am sure that Faith does not expect you will tell us a story, like 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' or 'Dollikins and the Miser;' and looking towards his little girl, as if for approval of what he was going to add, he continued: "You may make it as short as you please, only let us hear your best wish, children. Mind you, Miss Goodwin, Faith, does not say she will gratify it; for this is her own original idea, so I cannot say what she intends to do."

"That is a secret, papa, from you and everybody. I may tell mamma, though," said Faith.

And so Ned Ashton, who was to celebrate his twelfth birthday two days later in the month of roses, was asked to lead off in the story-telling. With all a boy's bravery he arose, then paused, as if trying to get up a bit more of courage, and

then, as if filled with the serious thought of a duty to perform, went on: "Once upon a time — I commence that way, because that seems the fashionable way of beginning stories. So, once upon a time I had a beautiful big dog" — here every child listened with eager expectancy of what was to follow — "and — now I have n't one. So now you know what I want most of anything!"

And such a laugh as went up from the little group; and all agreed with Judge Goodwin, who said that Ned's story was short and to the point.

"Next!" said Judge Goodwin; and little Bessie Barrett, who was nothing but a French doll in looks, tried to see how she could best manifest to the company what she most wanted. She, too, commenced in the old familiar way of —

"Once upon a time — there was a little girl, and her mamma showed her how to sew, and she made lots of dollie's dresses, so many that she had n't dollies enough to wear them; and so," she concluded, "if I had another dollie, she could wear some of those dresses, for I am that little girl."

As she sat down again, the children clapped their hands, while their elders thought how modestly the little miss had told her pretty story.

"And now, Miss Elsie, you are not to be spared, for Faith says you must do your part," said Judge Goodwin.

Elsie arose, and said sweetly: "Oh, I have everything that I want, now that I have a little sister Faith;" and with this pretty compliment to her little friend and hostess, the story-telling came to an end, and so did the day too, — at least, the

children's part of it, for five o'clock sounded out from the belfry of St. John's, and all felt that they must not stay beyond the hour not wishing to tire their little benefactress. So preparations for home were made, and "Many happy returns of the day" echoed and re-echoed from the happy children, until it almost seemed as if the very birds took up the refrain in their even songs.

CHAPTER X.

BY nine o'clock there was nothing to show that Falconsheight had rung but a few hours before with the merry voices and laughter of forty little people.

Everything was peaceful, and the moon looked out through the trees, and the stars twinkled brightly, as if saying their work had only begun. All had retired to their beds early, but Mrs. Goodwin seemed to have a care upon her mind that forbade sleep.

She tried to think that she had indulged in too strong a cup of tea at supper; but

even that would not explain the anxiety she seemed to feel lest the day's pleasures might prove too much for Faith's strength.

She arose from her bed, and throwing about her a light silk wrapper, slipped her feet into her bed-shoes, and walked to the door of her little girl's room, but would not venture across the threshold, until she had first made sure whether Faith was asleep or not.

No, she was not sleeping, but tossing restlessly.

"Mamma," she called, "is that you?"

"Yes, dearie, it is I. Why are you not sleeping, my little girl?" said Mrs. Goodwin.

"Oh, I am too happy to sleep," replied Faith. "Did n't we have a lovely time to-day? Do come and sit down by me, and let us talk it all up, mamma."

"Don't you think, little one, you had better wait until the morning?" replied her mother.

"Oh no, now, please," said Faith, "for I really want to talk with you about it — and," she added thoughtfully, "everything."

So Mrs. Goodwin could no longer resist the pleadings of her little girl, fearing she hardly knew what, an indefinable something, in that one word "everything," and took her seat by the side of Faith's bed.

"Did n't we have such a happy time to-day, mamma?" said Faith. "Everybody seemed to enjoy it, and, oh, I am so glad, for it was Elsie's first party, so she told me. I do love her so, mamma, don't you?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Goodwin, "I love her very tenderly."

"And don't you think, mamma, if she and her sweet mother could live here with us always, it would be nice? Elsie could take my place — sometime," she added slowly. "You said you were going to ask them to live with us always; and then you know, mamma, Elsie could have her best wish gratified, because I should be with her as her sister always," said Faith.

"I have already invited them to stay with us, at least until the summer is over, and Mrs. Lovelace goes back to the city to attend to some matters there, and will return again in a week," replied her mother.

"Oh, how lovely!" said Faith. "I am so happy now, and you and papa ought to be happy, too, in doing so much good to others; and you are, I know. Then,

mamma, will you please give Ned Ashton Beppo, the Irish setter that papa bought a year ago in the city? He tires me some days, barking, and I would like to give him to Ned to remember my birthday by — and me too," she added. "Then there is my big French dollie. I never play with her because I have so many others. Can't I give it to Bessie Barrett? It looks just like her. Can't I give it to her, mamma?" pleaded Faith.

"Yes, my dear, and I will do all you say, if you will promise me now to go to sleep," said her mother.

"Oh, I will go just as quick as I can, mamma," replied Faith: "for, look, the sky lanterns are so bright, I can almost see Grandma and Auntie May smiling at me."

And Mrs. Goodwin, as she looked at

the steeple of the little village church, fancied she saw the cross at its top, with a halo of light encircling it; and lo! a meteor, or shooting star, sped across the sky, and took its place between the two bright stars that had been such constant friends to her little girl through all the night watches of her short life. Turning to Faith, she said, —

"Now go to sleep, dearie. Good-night!" And Faith replied, —

"Good-night, mamma, kiss me good-night, until I see you in the bright morning, to-morrow. Good-night, for I am going to sleep now truly, mamma."

And Faith went to sleep, with the happy words upon her lips and the happy smile upon her face, and the sky lanterns burned brighter, as the night closed in, for before the morning came, another

angel kept watch over the sleepers at Falcons-height.

And on the morrow the little starry flag still hung from the window, and at its top a long white pennant, floating out to the summer wind, carried its message to every heart in Hazelwood, and told that Faith was at home!

"Yes," said Mrs. Goodwin, smiling through her tears, "our little girl is at home with the angels. They have only claimed their own, for she has lived so very near to them all through the years of her short life, it was but a step across the threshold for her little tired feet."

Then taking both Mrs. Lovelace and Elsie by the hand, she continued, —

"And we who are left can do nothing sweeter, in memory, of her, than to follow

her example of patience and unselfishness; and you, my good friends, must stay always with me to help me to continue her good work."

And in later years, as Elsie Lovelace, now to womanhood grown, looks back over the days of childhood, her sweetest thoughts are of her whose daily life was a noble example of all that was good, and who gave to those happy days at Hazelwood the tenderest memories of

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